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C O N F I D E N T I A L LA PAZ 002581

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [EAIR](#) [ETRD](#) [KDEM](#) [BL](#) [CU](#)
SUBJECT: "LITERACY ACCOMPLISHED:" LIBERTAD ACT AND
BOLIVIAN-CUBAN RELATIONS

REF: A. SECSTATE 126578
[1](#)B. LA PAZ 1179
[1](#)C. 07 LA PAZ 3152

Classified By: EcoPol Chief Mike Hammer for reasons 1.4 (b,d.)

[1](#)1. (U) The following responses are keyed to the questions in
reftel A and reflect new developments since reftel B.

[1](#)2. (C) Has the host country, in Post's opinion, worked to
promote the advancement of democracy and human rights in Cuba?

No, the Bolivian government continues to see Cuba as a viable
path for development.

[1](#)3. (C) Has the host country made other public statements or
undertaken governmental actions ... or actions in support of
civil society in Cuba through host country's diplomatic
missions or other fora?

No. To the contrary, Bolivian government officials are
uniformly supportive of the Cuban government. Bolivian
president Evo Morales considers Fidel Castro an "advisor" and
"a very wise man."

-- Morales announced a "national and international" campaign
in November to readmit Cuba to the OAS as a sign that all OAS
countries "are respectful of our differences." And, Evo said
if Cuba could not be readmitted, another parallel OAS should
be formed without the United States. Morales confided he had
not spoken with "commander (Venezuelan President Hugo)
Chavez" about the campaign as of late November and there is
little evidence the campaign is anything more than a
publicity ploy. (Note: Morales made a similar pitch to the
move the United Nations out of New York about the same time
last year. End Note.) Reacting to the suspension of U.S.
trade preferences (ATPDEA), Morales remarked October 6 that
Fidel Castro had advised him "not to fear an economic
blockade by the United States." Castro allegedly concluded
Bolivia was in far stronger position than Cuba to whether
U.S. sanctions, with friendly neighbors and rich natural
resources, leading Morales to conclude that "being

decertified or having the textile (market) taken always or blocked by the ATPDEA is not going to affect us at all." Morales made the comments during his annual pilgrimage to Vallegrande, near the site of Ernesto "Che" Guevara's death in 1967.

-- The Cuban Ambassador to Bolivia Rafael Dausa frequently speaks on the Bolivian-US diplomatic situation, usually critiquing the United States for alleged involvement in Bolivian sovereign affairs. Dausa applauded the Bolivian government's decision to expel the DEA in November and the Ambassador in September. Dausa said, "In our judgment, there exists sufficient reasons and arguments to consider that the DEA and the U.S. Ambassador, Philip Goldberg were violating international law by interfering in Bolivian internal affairs." Dausa also openly opposed the autonomy referendums of four Bolivian Departments in 2008, calling them "legally baseless" and "secessionist."

-- In a September 16 statement, Cuban President Raul Castro denounced the "interference of the U.S. government in the internal affairs of Bolivia. Castro also clarified that Cuban "cooperation workers" in Bolivia "are totally and exclusively dedicated in helping in the health and educational programs benefiting the sister nation."

-- A small pro-Cuba group, the Bolivian Movement of Solidarity with Cuba, occasionally organizes workshops and seminars, often in conjunction with Che Guevara anniversaries (i.e. when Che came to Bolivia, when he did something in Bolivia, his death in Bolivia). The group also organizes

occasion rallies in support of Cuban policy and writes love letters to the Castros, which are small and virtually ignored by the press but are covered extensively by the Cuban Embassy's Web site.

-- A number of Cuban-government authors made cases in 2008 to support Bolivian Presidency Minister Juan Ramon Quintana's conspiracy theory that USAID is supporting the overthrow of the Morales Administration, spuriously linking USAID contractors with similar efforts to topple the Venezuelan and Cuban governments (via Radio Marti).

14. (C) Have there been any high-level diplomatic visits between Cuba and host country in the past six months?

-- President Morales received a Cuban National Assembly delegation November 5. Assembly Vice President Ana Fidelia Quirot offered Cuba's help to prepare Sucre for the 16th Bolivarian Games in 2009. The group visited La Paz to attend the second annual Cuban-Bolivian Inter-Parliamentary Meeting of Friendship. Also attending: Inter-Parliamentary Friendship President and Cuban Deputy Jorge Gonzalez and Jose Luis Toledo, Chairman of the Cuban National Assembly's Constitutional and Juridical Commission.

-- Cuban Cultural Minister Abel Prieto unveiled Fidel Castro's book "Peace in Colombia" at the Government Palace December 2. Morales promised to distribute the book in Bolivia.

-- Bolivia's Constituent Assembly President, Silvia Lazarte, attended the June unveiling of another Cuban-government published book, "Fidel, Bolivia, and Something More," documenting Fidel Castro's 1993 visit to Bolivia, in Havana.

-- Cuban Deputy Cultural Minister Fernando Rojas led a Cuban delegation July 27-30 to attend pro-Morales events in the run-up to the August 10 recall referendum. The delegation also attended Bolivarian Alternative for the American (ALBA) and meetings.

-- Morales announced in December plans to sponsor a week of celebrations in Bolivia to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Cuban Revolution. Morales also promised to send a large delegation of local and national officials to Havana January 1 for the Cuban government's celebration, although it

appears that such plans have been canceled.

15. (C) Did the host country offer or deliver humanitarian or other assistance to the Cuban People in the wake of the major damage caused by Hurricanes Gustav (August 30) and Ike (September 8)?

President Morales "expressed interest" in Cuba's recovery from the hurricanes December 3 and explained that Bolivia would try to help by sending a letter to the participants of the Climate Summit being held in Poland and generally work to counter the effects of climate change.

16. (C) What is the nature of investments (and names, if known) that host country businesses have in Cuba? What host country businesses participated in the Havana Trade Fair (November 3)?

-- Bolivia still has no significant investments in Cuba.

-- Bolivian representatives attended FIHAV 2008 and signed agreements at the event through Promueve. Promueve replaced Center of Promotion (CEPROBOL) as the Bolivian government's main production promotion organization after CEPROBOL was shut down in October 2008. The Government is currently encouraging Bolivian exporters that were specifically affected by the U.S. trade preferences (ATPDEA) suspension to

register with Promueve to access new markets, including Cuba and Venezuela.

17. (C) Are there any bilateral trade agreements between host country and Cuba?

-- Cuba and Bolivia have not made any significant new agreements since signing a "Complementary Economic Agreement" November 21, 2007 (ref tel C). The two countries remain bound by their 1995 Economic Cooperation Agreement and the "People's Trade Agreement" with Venezuela (ALBA.) Despite a series of publicized bilateral agreements and trade fairs under the Morales administration, trade between Cuba and Bolivia remains relatively insignificant. Bolivian exports to Cuba did increase in 2008 to \$500,000 from \$100,000 in 2007, however it still remains at less than 1 percent of Bolivian exports.

-- There have been no significant breakthroughs between Bolivian and Cuban officials regarding bilateral trade. In November, ALBA officials met in Venezuela to discuss future plans, but no firm deals were signed. In October, Bolivian Vice Ministry of Economic Affairs Pablo Guzman and Cuban Ambassador to Uruguay Marielena Ruiz Capote signed an agreement on tariffs on the margins of the Latin America Integration Association (ALADI) in Montevideo. However, like prior bilateral trade agreements, the agreement is unlikely to result in any significant increase in trade.

-- In November, Bolivian authorities approved licenses for the state-run Cuban airline Cubana de Aviacion to fly in and out of Santa Cruz. The route will fly Havana-Caracas-Santa Cruz once a week at a cost of approximately \$800 USD. The carrier might eventually compete with the Bolivian national airline, BoA, who previously announced a similar ALBA flight plan. BoA is set to begin their domestic operations in December and Cubana de Aviacion announced they will begin their flights in January of 2009.

18. (C) Are there any exchange programs between host country and Cuba?

-- Although the Cuban Embassy and other sources claim almost 2,000 Cuban doctors are working in Bolivia, President Morales said the number was 1,000 in November. Cuban President Raul Castro claimed Cuban medical personnel provided assistance to 17 million Bolivians from the programs inception in 2006 to September, 2008. Cuban health officials asserted in June that the number of consultations was 13.6 million with 13,400 lives saved. Although the program is generally praised by

the Bolivian poor in remote rural areas, who might otherwise forgo routine medical care, complaints concerning Cuban doctors' lack of training and equipment are still being reported. Rural Bolivians have told U.S. military medical personnel temporarily assigned to rural medical assistance programs in Bolivia that the Cuban doctors routinely refer them to larger cities for care because the Cubans can only treat basic ailments and injuries and can supply few needed medicines. Opposition contacts claim the Cuban medical centers serve a dual purpose as a training and organization hubs for leftist groups and are highly suspicious of planes ostensibly transporting medical personnel in and out of Bolivia. According to a Peruvian diplomat, the Cuban Embassy once bragged they were well informed about what was happening throughout the country thanks to the reports of their doctors. In September reporters asked a group of Cubans arriving at the Cochabamba airport about the reason for their visit. None of the arrivals would comment, however the Bolivian government later assured they were medical personnel.

-- President Morales declared the Department (state) of Beni "free of illiteracy" December 13, the department to be so

designated in 2008, marking the culmination of the Cuban plan to eliminate illiteracy in Bolivian territory under the "Yes I Can!" campaign. Although the plan fell 3,000 short of its goal to make 823,000 Bolivians literate by September, it was apparently close enough to declare the entire Bolivian country of about 9.2 million "literate." There will be a formal ceremony celebrating the end of the 33-month, \$36.7 million (according the Bolivian Education Ministry) program December 2008 in Cochabamba. According to press reports, Paraguayan President Fernando Lugo, OAS Secretary General Jose Miguel Insulza, and UN representatives. Bolivia is the third country to "graduate" from the program after Cuba (1961) and Venezuela (2005). Morales said many of the more than 100 Cuban literary advisors aided by Venezuelan logistical and equipment support would now be moved to Paraguay and would eventually "liberate all of Latin America from illiteracy." The program is constantly praised by Evo Morales, who endorsed the audio-visual method to UNICEF in 2008 and often holds ceremonies with the Cuban Ambassador for areas that are considered "free from illiteracy" by the program, using such events as a launching pad for broader endorsements of Cuba and attacks on the United States. Comments made during the literacy declaration of Chuquisaca state November 24 were typical: "I hope we can name Chuquisaca also a territory free from neoliberalism, fascism, and racism." Cuban Ambassador Rafael Dausa claimed at the event that the newly literate "are true protagonists of this battle in defense of the (President) Morales' democratic and cultural revolution," vindicating concerns that the program is largely a leftist propaganda tool. Dausa added that the literacy program would help Bolivians vote in favor of the government's draft constitution during a January 25 referendum, which will "guarantee the dignity" of Bolivians. Dausa announced a follow-on program "Yes I Can Continues," which is scheduled to begin in 2009 to take graduates to the next level of learning/indoctrination. Our opposition contacts contend the program "graduates" anyone who can write their name, identify numbers, and understand road signs. Opposition congresswoman Elsa Guevara Aguirre (protect) told us the vast majority of "Yes I Can" graduates could not understand or fill in their own ballots during the August 10 recall referendum, essentially allowing pro-government election "volunteers" to vote on their behalf.

-- Cuba offers limited scholarships to Bolivian students seeking to study at Cuban universities and Morales claimed in November that more than 5,000 Bolivians were studying in Cuba (As of mid-2008, Cuban sources claim 1,000 Bolivians had graduated medical from Cuban medical courses since 2006). The Cuban Embassy continues to deny any irregularity in the death of Beatriz Proco Calle, a Bolivian medical student who died under mysterious circumstances in Cuba and whose cadaver was sent back without "lungs, kidneys, liver, ovaries, tongue and teeth," according to Proco's family members. The family

alleges the Cuban Embassy pressured the family's silence on the matter, although Ambassador Dausa accuses the family of leveraging the death for money. The Bolivian government denied the family's request for an investigation.

19. (C) COMMENT. The Morales government looks up to the Cuban government like a big brother. The Venezuelan link remains crucial, as Cuba, bolstered by subsidized Venezuelan oil, sends medical and literacy assistance to Bolivia with heavy Venezuelan logistical support. Venezuela and Cuba can be expected to exercise considerable influence in Bolivia so long as Evo Morales remains in power. Please note, we have no independent means of validating the Castro math applied to the self-documented statistical benefits of Cuban social programs in Bolivia. We also do not know how many Cuban literacy volunteers will leave to Paraguay or stay for the follow-on literacy program in Bolivia. In any event, the Cubans have provided an excuse to stay in Bolivia indefinitely, as Ambassador Dausa claimed the program could

be extended to include secondary education and even university studies. END COMMENT.
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